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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [XA](#) [ZI](#) [AU](#) [UNHRC](#) [ELAB](#)
SUBJECT: RAISING ZIMBABWE IN GENEVA UN INSTITUTIONS

REF: A. A) STATE 44297

[1](#)B. B) STATE 44905

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Mark Storella. Reasons: 1.4 (B/D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is considering ways to further influence the situation in Zimbabwe. Responding to the Ambassador's April 29 demarche, Deputy High Commissioner Kang said the proposal to appoint a special human rights envoy was among several under consideration, with OHCHR staffers later adding that the idea would have more chance of success if proposed by or with the endorsement of SADC. High Commissioner Arbour issued a statement on April 27 expressing alarm about the violence there, and six UN Special Rapporteurs issued a joint statement on April 29. Meanwhile, an OHCHR staffer remains on the ground in Zimbabwe, urging officials to exercise restraint. Zimbabwe could be discussed in the June ILO Conference, with a possibility for the U.S. to make a statement on the subject. END SUMMARY.

DEMARCHE DELIVERED

[1](#)2. (C) With High Commissioner Louise Arbour out of the country, the Ambassador raised ref A talking points with Deputy High Commissioner Kyung-wha Kang on April 29. Kang shared the USG's concern about the situation in Zimbabwe and expressed appreciation for the proposal to appoint a special envoy to Zimbabwe. She said this idea was among several under consideration to respond to the deteriorating situation there.

[1](#)3. (C) Scott Campbell, head of OHCHR's African Unit, subsequently commented to us that he and his colleagues saw the idea as promising but that it would have greater chance of success if proposed by or with the endorsement of SADC. If it were simply proposed by the High Commissioner herself, countries such as Egypt would argue that it was typical of Western attacks on less developed countries, an argument that would resonate and stymie the effort. Campbell reiterated that, aside from consideration of action on Zimbabwe in other Geneva-based human rights bodies, OHCHR was actively looking

to play a constructive role.

TWO STATEMENTS

14. (U) On April 27, Arbour had issued a statement expressing alarm over the reports of continued violence and calling for political leaders to restrain their supporters. The statement pointed to "an emerging pattern of political violence inflicted mainly, but not exclusively, on rural supporters" of the MDC party, while noting reports that some MDC supporters also were "resorting to intimidation and violence." It added that the deterioration would have grave consequences not only for all Zimbabweans but for neighboring states, and would "undermine national and regional attempts to diffuse the present political crisis."

15. (U) In a follow-up, six UN Special Rapporteurs issued a statement on April 29 expressing grave concern about the unfolding situation. Those mandate holders -- SR on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions Philip Alston; SR on Violence Against Women Yakin Erturk; SR on Adequate Housing Miloon Khotari; SR for the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Opinion and Expression Ambeyi Ligabo; SRSG on Human Rights Defenders Hina Jilani; and SR on Torture Manfred Nowak -- laid out "reliable information" on acts of "intimidation, violence and torture" and described these as organized and coordinated by the government. They also noted harassment of independent journalists and media personnel, which "may be seen as attempts to impede any objective reporting on the situation." The Special Rapporteurs urged the authorities to restore peace and put an end to organized and politically motivated violence, and to grant independent observers and the media free access to the entire country.

OHCHR'S SMALL PRESENCE ON THE GROUND

16. (C) Campbell, the head of the Africa Unit, said that OHCHR had one low-level official on the ground in Zimbabwe. That official was focusing his message on restraint, respect for human rights, protection issues and human rights defenders, rather than addressing election issues. In conjunction with the UN Resident Coordinator, that official had good access to some government officials, although they were not responsive to his message. The official was continuing with his efforts, although he was keenly aware of the sensitivity of the message and the possibility of expulsion from the country. A second OHCHR official recently departed Zimbabwe, our interlocutor noted, after what had always been planned as a brief visit.

ILO POSSIBILITIES

17. (SBU) Zimbabwe could be addressed when the Committee on the Application of Standards meets during the ILO Conference in June. In the run-up to the session, workers and employers will negotiate on which countries to include in the discussion, with a draft list to be provided to governments in mid-May. While past practice has been for only the government in question, workers and employers to make statements during the Committee session, other countries have on rare occasions done so as well, leaving open the possibility that the U.S. delegation could do so.

18. (SBU) In the past two years, Zimbabwe was included on the negotiated list of subjects for discussion, and it is likely to be included again this year. The workers would choose one of the multiple cases against Zimbabwe to highlight. Any U.S. comment would have to address that specific case and be approved by the Department of Labor. Last year, Zimbabwe refused to participate in the Committee meeting and did not make a statement. This truncated discussion of the subject, since customarily, countries not present are not discussed.

TICHENOR